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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: GERMAN CHANCELLOR URGES FURTHER GOT REFORM

REF: A. ANKARA 1339

[1](#)B. ANKARA 1340

[1](#)C. ANKARA 1074

Classified by Polcouns John Kunstadter; reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: During his May 3-4 visit to Turkey, German Chancellor Schroeder praised GOT leaders for past reforms and encouraged further progress. He assured PM Erdogan and President Sezer that the EU will keep its commitment to open accession talks with Turkey in October. He said the German Parliament will adopt a "balanced" resolution on the massacre of Armenians in 1915 without using the term "genocide." The Chancellor also met with the Ecumenical Patriarch to underscore German support for religious freedom in Turkey, and publicly criticized the Greek Cypriots for rejecting the Annan Plan. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Schroeder met with Erdogan and Sezer in Ankara and then flew to Istanbul, where he met with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, gave a speech at Marmara University, and attended the Turkish-German Business Congress.

Schroeder Seeks to Rejuvenate Reforms

[1](#)3. (C) Thomas Bagger, political and press counselor at the German Embassy, told us the visit was scheduled shortly after the December 17 EU Summit, when the EU agreed to open accession talks with Turkey. At the time, the Germans expected it to be a victory lap following the Summit success. However, the context of the visit was dramatically changed by subsequent events casting doubt on Turkey's EU candidacy. The EU Troika's March visit was marred by police violence (reftels A-B), the GOT reform drive appears to have stalled (reftel C), and rising unemployment in Germany is fueling anti-Turkish sentiment. The German Parliament, meanwhile, has been debating a resolution on the 1915 Armenian massacres. Schroeder came to Turkey with the aim of rejuvenating the GOT reform effort, while showing critics in Germany that he is not overlooking Turkey's shortcomings.

[1](#)4. (U) Bagger said Schroeder praised Erdogan and Sezer for the EU-related reforms adopted by the GOT over the past three years. He did not "lecture" them on the recent lack of progress, but encouraged them to get the reform process back on track. He also urged the GOT to sign the Ankara Agreement extension protocol, which would formally extend Turkey's Customs Union agreement to Cyprus and the other new EU member states. The Chancellor averred that the EU would place no new conditions on Turkey. He pledged, both privately and publicly, that the EU will stick to its commitment to open accession talks with Turkey October 3. He assured the Turks that the outcome of the May 29 French referendum on the EU Constitution will not affect Turkey's accession process.

Visit With "Ecumenical Patriarch"

[1](#)5. (U) Schroeder's meeting with Patriarch Bartholomew was intended as a signal to both the GOT and Turkey-skeptics in Germany that he expects the GOT to make greater progress on religious freedom. German church leaders had urged Schroeder to emphasize religious freedom during the visit. Contrary to some Turkish press reports, Schroeder did not discuss at length the need for the GOT to reach agreement on the re-opening of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Halki Seminary. However, Schroeder repeatedly referred to the Patriarch as ecumenical, a title strenuously rejected by the GOT; the Chancellor made a point of using the title during his speech at Marmara University, with Erdogan sitting in the front row.

Armenian Issue: Turkish Threats "Counterproductive"

[1](#)6. (U) Erdogan was the first to raise the issue of the Armenian massacres, urging Schroeder to prevent the German Parliament from adopting a resolution on the issue.

Schroeder bluntly replied that Parliament will pass a resolution. He emphasized that the resolution will not include the word "genocide." It will be a balanced statement, focused to a large extent on Germany's culpability as an ally of the Ottomans at the time.

17. (C) Schroeder told his GOT interlocutors that Turkey needs to adopt a more flexible, constructive approach to the issue of the massacre of Armenians. He said Germany will support Erdogan's declared initiative to have a joint Turkish-Armenian historical commission examine the matter. He warned that Turkey only undermines its position in Germany by using threats to try to block an Armenian resolution. Bagger told us this was a reference to Turkish Ambassador to Germany Irtemcelik, who was present during Schroeder's meetings. Bagger described Irtemcelik as "running amok" in his efforts to warn German MPs that they will turn Germany's 2.5 million ethnic Turks into enemies if they adopt an Armenian resolution. "This plays right into the fears of those who see the Turkish community in Germany as a fifth column," Bagger said. Sezer, recognizing the target of Schroeder's remark, asserted that Irtemcelik is fulfilling his duty to protect Turkey's interests.

Schroeder Criticizes Greek Cypriots

18. (C) Schroeder deviated from his prepared text in his comments on Cyprus at Marmara University, Bagger said. The Chancellor told the audience that North Cyprus will be included in bilateral discussions of how to boost German-Turkish cooperation in agriculture and tourism. He said he sympathizes with the Turkish desire to see North Cyprus treated fairly, and averred that it would be wrong to "punish those in Cyprus who have done the right thing while rewarding those who have done otherwise," a reference to the 2004 referendum on the Annan Plan, which Turkish Cypriots approved and Greek Cypriots rejected. "That's the clearest criticism of the Greek Cypriots that I have heard from the Chancellor," Bagger said.

19. (C) The audience applauded the Cyprus comments, which took German diplomats by surprise. Bagger said the speech went beyond Schroeder's statements in private meetings, and appeared to indicate a shift in German policy. However, it is not clear whether there will be any change in practice to Germany's approach on Cyprus. Bagger speculated that Schroeder felt the need to provide "something for the Turkish soul on Cyprus" after disappointing the GOT on the Armenian resolution and raising concerns on religious freedom.

CHP Left Out

110. (C) Schroeder did not meet with opposition Republican Peoples' Party (CHP) Chairman Baykal or any other CHP representatives. Bagger said Schroeder's meeting with Baykal last year was unproductive, and there has since been virtually no contact between CHP and the German Social Democrats.

Comment

111. (C) Schroeder appears to have accomplished his goals, if only modestly. His praise of GOT reform, and supportive words on Cyprus, bolster Erdogan at a time when Turks are beginning to question both the competence of the ruling AK Party and the sincerity of the EU. The Chancellor drew very little criticism from either the GOT or the media for referring to the Patriarch as ecumenical, indicating that he may have won points with German church leaders while at the same time forcing the Turks to adjust their normally mulish approach to the issue.

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